

FACULTY OF MUSIC UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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AN EVENING WITH

S I R M I C H A E L T I P P E T T

1986-87 Wilma and Clifford Smith Visitor in Music

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Friday, January 23, 1987

8:00 pm

WALTER HALL

Edward Johnson Building

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PROGRAMME

Sonata No. 2 (1962) for piano
in one movement
Chia-Chien Chou, piano

Songs for Ariel (1962) for medium voice and
instrumental ensemble

1. Come unto these yellow sands
2. Full fathom five
3. Where the bee sucks

Anne Demougin, mezzo-soprano
Claude Lapalme, conductor
Leslie Newman, flute Pauline Farrugia, clarinet
Jenny Wilson, horn Mark Mazur, percussion
Marta McCarthy, piano

The Blue Guitar (1983): Sonata for solo guitar
Medium slow - slow
Very slow
Fast
Norbert Kraft, guitar

INTERMISSION

A conversation with SIR MICHAEL TIPPETT

String Quartet No. 1 (1934-35; rev. 1943)

Allegro
Lento cantabile
Allegro assai
Krista Buckland and Jared Erhardt, violins
Jonathan Craig, viola Joo Won Kim, cello

The Heart's Assurance (1950-51) for high voice and piano

- I. Song
 - II. The Heart's Assurance
 - III. Compassion
 - IV. The Dancer
 - V. Remember Your Lovers
- Adrianne Pieczonka, soprano
Che Anne Loewen, piano

MICHAEL TIPPETT was born in London in 1905. He studied piano as a child, but realised early on that he wished to become a composer. He did not come into contact with most of the classical repertoire, however, until he entered the Royal College of Music in 1923, where he studied composition and conducting.

Tippett left the RCM in 1928 and for some years taught French and music at a private school. Dissatisfied with his compositions of this period, he withdrew them from publication, and in 1930, returned to the RCM to study with R.O. Morris.

His first published works, the First String Quartet (1935, revised 1944) and Piano Sonata No. 1 (1936-7), show evidence of the skill in counterpoint which he had developed during this period of intensive study.

The years immediately before the Second World War gave direction and momentum to his political and social beliefs. The result was the oratorio A Child of Our Time, which proved his ability to identify with, and articulate, feelings in the public world, as eloquently as more personal inspirations.

In 1940 he was appointed director at Morley College, London, a post he held until 1951. The First Symphony was completed in 1945, and the next six years were devoted to his first opera, The Midsummer Marriage. He continued to compose prolifically for the next thirty years. His output includes three more operas, three more piano sonatas; symphonies and quartets; his largest work for the concert hall, The Mask of Time (1980-2); and the Triple Concerto (1978-9); The Blue Guitar, for guitar solo, and Festal Brass with Blues for brass band.

Tippett was knighted in 1966 and became a Companion of Honour in 1979. In 1976, he was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society and, in 1983, he was awarded the Order of Merit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Tippett received the Prix de Composition Musicale of the Fondation Pierre de Monaco in 1984. He is now engaged on a fifth opera, New Year, which he hopes to complete by September, 1988.

Meirion Bowen (1986)

NOTES

Piano Sonata No. 2 (1962) for piano

The two major pieces that followed the three-act opera King Priam (1958-61) and grew out of its sound-world, the second Piano Sonata and the Concerto for Orchestra, are perhaps Sir Michael Tippett's most experimental music, in so far as they are his most radical departures from the sonata/symphony archetype. The Sonata is composed in a more extreme, and highly compressed, version of the opera's mosaic-like formal technique: it lasts only ten minutes, but is made up of thirty-eight sections of eight different musics, each music with its own tempo. The sections vary in length from one bar to sixty-six: there is no real development within them; the development is in the way they are juxtaposed.

Songs for Ariel (1962)

In 1962, Sir Michael was asked to provide incidental music for a production of The Tempest at the Old Vic Theatre in London. The three songs that Ariel sings and which have been set by many composers from Shakespeare's time up to the present were in Tippett's version originally scored for a small chamber ensemble, but he subsequently arranged the accompaniment for piano or harpsichord. The second of them, "Full Fathom Five" is, despite its simplicity, quintessential Tippett. And indeed, Tippett has said that if only one of his pieces were to survive, he would be content if it were this song; the harmony at "rich and strange," for example, is just that: a superb demonstration of how to make conventional chords sound fresh.

The Blue Guitar (1983): Sonata for solo guitar

In 1934, a Cubist exhibition including some Picassos came to Hartford, Connecticut. The poet Wallace Stevens went to see it. He was struck by a Picasso painting featuring a guitar player. Its impact was such that he was stimulated to write a poem with the title, The Man with The Blue Guitar. He set down the essential matter of the poem in the first stanza, which begins:

The man bent over his guitar,
A shearsman of sorts. The day was green.

They said, "You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are."

The man replied, "Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar."

Stevens explores the paradox of outer reality and artistic reality in a further 32 stanzas.

Reading the poem acted for me roughly as the sight of Picasso's picture did for the poet. But of course, all the words and concepts have disappeared and this piece for guitar is essentially music. It could quite properly be appreciated solely as a short sonata. All that remained from the poem were three moods, or gestures, which suggested titles for the movements:

Transforming/Verwandeln Being the lion in the lute
 Before the lion locked in stone.

Dreaming/Traümen ... Morning is not sun,
 It is this posture of the nerves,

Juggling/Jonglieren ... the old fantoche
 Hanging his shawl upon the wind.

The Blue Guitar was written for Julian Bream and commissioned by the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation in celebration of the tenth anniversary of Ambassador Auditorium, Pasadena, California. The world premiere of the work was given by Julian Bream at the Ambassador Auditorium on November 9, 1983. The work is dedicated to the memory of the conductor Calvin Simmons (1950-82).

Michael Tippett

String Quartet No. 1 (1934-35; rev. 1943)

The first piece which Tippett had wanted to publish, though in a rather different form from the one in which it was conceived, is the First String Quartet of 1934-35. In 1943, he replaced the original first two movements --

an adagio and a scherzo -- with a sonata allegro, a tense and passionate piece in his Beethoven manner. He felt that these two movements, though satisfying from a formal point of view, were not strong enough musically. The original contained two substantial slow movements; in the revised version, these have been replaced, to considerably greater effect, by a single slow movement, placed centrally. This movement presents three varied statements of an enormously soaring theme (as has often been remarked, one of the most striking features of Tippett's melodies is their sheer length) in a single, unbroken flow. But it is in the finale that suddenly, and apparently out of nowhere, the style that is most closely associated with Tippett appears, fully-fledged. This movement is headed in the manuscript by a quotation from Blake: "Damn braces, bless relaxes."

The Heart's Assurance (1950-51) for high voice and piano

The song cycle The Heart's Assurance, for high voice and piano, was written for Peter Pears in 1951. Tippett set three poems by Alun Lewis and two by Sidney Keyes. The songs are all strophic, which is to say that the poems are written in verses and the music follows the verse shape. In writing strophic songs, Tippett was placing himself in the tradition of, among many others, Schubert, another composer for whom he feels a close affinity.

When a poem is set to music, Tippett says, one is no longer able, nor is there any need, to appreciate it as poetry: "The music of a song destroys the verbal music of a poem utterly. I am inclined to think that a composer responds less to a poem's verbal sound, when he chooses that poem as a vehicle for his musical art, than to the poem's situation, lyrical or dramatic." This is a rather contentious statement: as Peter Pears has remarked, one might more truly speak of the relationship between music and poem as a happy marriage than of one destroying the other -- but it obviously reflects what Tippett felt to be the truth about his own song cycle, at the time he wrote it. What is clear is that the situation, the common theme of the five poems, which is love under the shadow of death, was for him the most important factor, over and above the individual words of the poems. If we respond to the refrain of the last poem: "Young men ...

Remember your lovers," it is because, Tippett would have it, we are responding to the general situation of the poem; we are responding to the words as poetry. Whatever the truth of this -- and it is hard to accept that we are not also responding in some measure to the poetry in the words -- we have in Tippett's setting a superb fusion of words and music, and which is especially moving when the refrain appears for the fourth and last time at the very end of the song, and the cycle.

The Heart's Assurance is an intensely personal work, being dedicated to Francesca Allinson, a woman whom Tippett had loved, and who, in 1945, committed suicide. Nevertheless, Tippett has said, "I was able to discharge my personal emotion into the general poetic expression, and to select from two poets ... the poems that gave me an artistically satisfactory series of poems for songs ... To hammer home my chief point about song as an art form, I need only state that when we listen to this song cycle based on the work of two poets, we are completely unaware of which poet is which."

All notes, with the exception of that on The Blue Guitar, from the text MICHAEL TIPPETT, by David Matthews.

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Sir Michael Tippett's residency as the Second Wilma and Clifford Smith Visitor in Music at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, from January 19 to 23, 1987, has also been made possible through the co-operation of the Toronto Symphony and the generous assistance of the British Council.

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This evening's concert is being recorded by CJRT-FM for future broadcast.

TEXTS

Songs for Ariel

I. Come unto these yellow sands
Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands:
Curtsied when you have, and kissed,
The wild waves whist.
Foot it featly here and there:
And, sweet sprites, the burthen hear. Hark, !
Bow-wow, Bow-wow,
The watchdogs bark;
Bow-wow, Bow-wow,
Hark,! I hear the strain of strutting chanticleer Cry
Cock-a-diddle dow, Cock-a-diddle dow.

II. Full fathom five
Full fathom five thy father lies;
of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange:
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.
Ding-dong, Ding-dong,
Hark, now I hearthen,
Ding-dong, bell.

III. Where the bee sucks
Where the bee sucks there suck I;
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch while owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly after summer merrily.
Merrily do I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.
Where the bee sucks there suck I.

The Heart's Assurance

I. Song

Oh, journeyman,
Before this endless belt began
Its cruel revolutions,
you and the Naked Eden
in Eden shook the apple tree.
Oh soldier lad,
Before the soul of things turned bad,
She offered you so modestly
A shining apple from the tree.
Oh lonely wife,
Before your lover left this life
He took you in his gentle arms.
How trivial then were Life's alarms.
And though Death taps down every street
Familiar as the postman on his beat,
Remember this
That Life has trembled in a kiss
From Genesis to Genesis,
And what's transfigured will live on
Long after Death has come and gone.

II. The Heart's Assurance

O never trust the heart's assurance
Trust only the heart's fear.
And what I'm saying is,
Go back my lovely
Though you will never hear.
O never trust your pride of movement,
Trust only pride's distress.
The only holy limbs are the broken fingers
Still raised to praise and bless.
For the careless heart is bound with chains
And terribly cast down:
The beast of pride is hunted out
And baited through the town.

III. Compassion

She in the hurling night
With lucid simple hands,
Stroked away his fright
Loosed his blood-soaked bands.

And seriously aware
Of the terror she caressed
Drew his matted hair
Gladly to her breast.
And he who babbled Death
Shivered and grew still
In the meadows of her breath
Restoring his dark will.
Nor did she ever stir
In the storm's calm centre
To feel the tail, hooves, fur
Of the god-faced centaur.

IV. The Dancer

"He's in his grave and on his head
I dance," the lovely dancer said,
"My feet like fireflies, illumine
The choking blackness of his tomb.
'Had he not died we would have wed,
And still I'd dance," the dancer said,
'To keep the creeping sterile doom
Out of the darkness of my womb.
'Our love was always ringed with dread
Of death,' the lovely dancer said,
'And so I danced for his delight,
And scorched the blackened core of night
With passion bright,' the dancer said,
'And now I dance to earn my bread.'

Remember your lovers

Young men walking the open streets
Of death's republic, remember your lovers.
When you foresaw with vision prescient
The planet pain rising across your sky
We fused your sight in our soft burning beauty:
We laid you down in meadows, drunk with cowslips
And led you in the ways of our bright city
Young men who wander death's vague meadows,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than flowers.

When you woke grave chilled at midnight
To pace the pavement of your bitter dream
We brought you back to bed and brought you home,
From the dark antechamber of desire
Into our lust as bright as candle flame.
Young men who lie in the carven beds of death,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than dreams.
From the sun shelt'ring your careless head
Or from the painted devil your quick eye,
We led you out of terror tenderly
And fooled you into peace with our soft words
And gave you all we had and let you die.
Young men drunk with death's unquenchable wisdom,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than love.

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The Faculty of Music cordially invites you to attend other events in the Edward Johnson Building, Throughout the year there are many recitals by Faculty members and students as well as orchestra, band, choral, jazz and opera performances. Information is available in the Calendar of Events which may be picked up in the Main Lobby near the Box Office. For information telephone 978-3744.

Contributions for the scholarship or operating funds (payable to the University of Toronto and directed to the Faculty of Music) are most welcome and are eligible for a receipt for income tax purposes. Please address donations or enquiries to Professor Carl Morey, Dean, Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1. Telephone 978-3761.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE FACULTY OF MUSIC

January 24 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MICHEL TABACHNIK, conductor; ANNE LOUISE,
piano
MOZART Symphony No.36, K.425, "The Linz"
CHOPIN Piano Concerto in E minor
SCHUMANN Symphony No. 4 in D minor
MacMillan Theatre 8:00 pm
\$8/\$5 students, seniors

January 25 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO WIND SYMPHONY
 STEPHEN CHENETTE, conductor
 Works by POLGAR, KULESHA, WEINZWEIG,
 BECKWITH, COAKLEY, REVUELTAS, and
 COPLAND
 MacMillan Theatre 3:00 pm \$3 G.A.

January 29 THURSDAY NOON SERIES
 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE
 Walter Hall 12:10 pm FREE

February 5 THURSDAY NOON SERIES
 Programme featuring student chamber groups
 Walter Hall 12:10 pm FREE

February 5 THURSDAY NOON SERIES
 "In Search of Mahler"
 Lecture by HENRY-LOUIS DE LA GRANGE,
 author of the three-volume biography of
 Mahler
 Walter Hall 1:10 pm FREE

February 15 13th Annual Donald McMurrich Scholarship
 Concert
 The Toronto Symphony Bass Quartet &
 Friends perform the works of SAM DAVIS &
 others
 Walter Hall 3:00 pm \$3 General Admission

February 26 THURSDAY NOON SERIES
 Programme featuring student chamber groups
 Walter Hall 12:10 pm FREE

February 26 U OF T CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE
 ROBIN ENGELMAN, conductor
 Works by STRAVINSKY, VAN DIEREN, JANACEK,
 KOECHLIN and EUBIE BLAKE
 Walter Hall 8:00 pm \$3 General Admission

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